


BELIEF IN A PERSONAL GOD

A.v. C.P. HUIZINGA

W. J. Hyde





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With christian Regards

to Mr Pyles

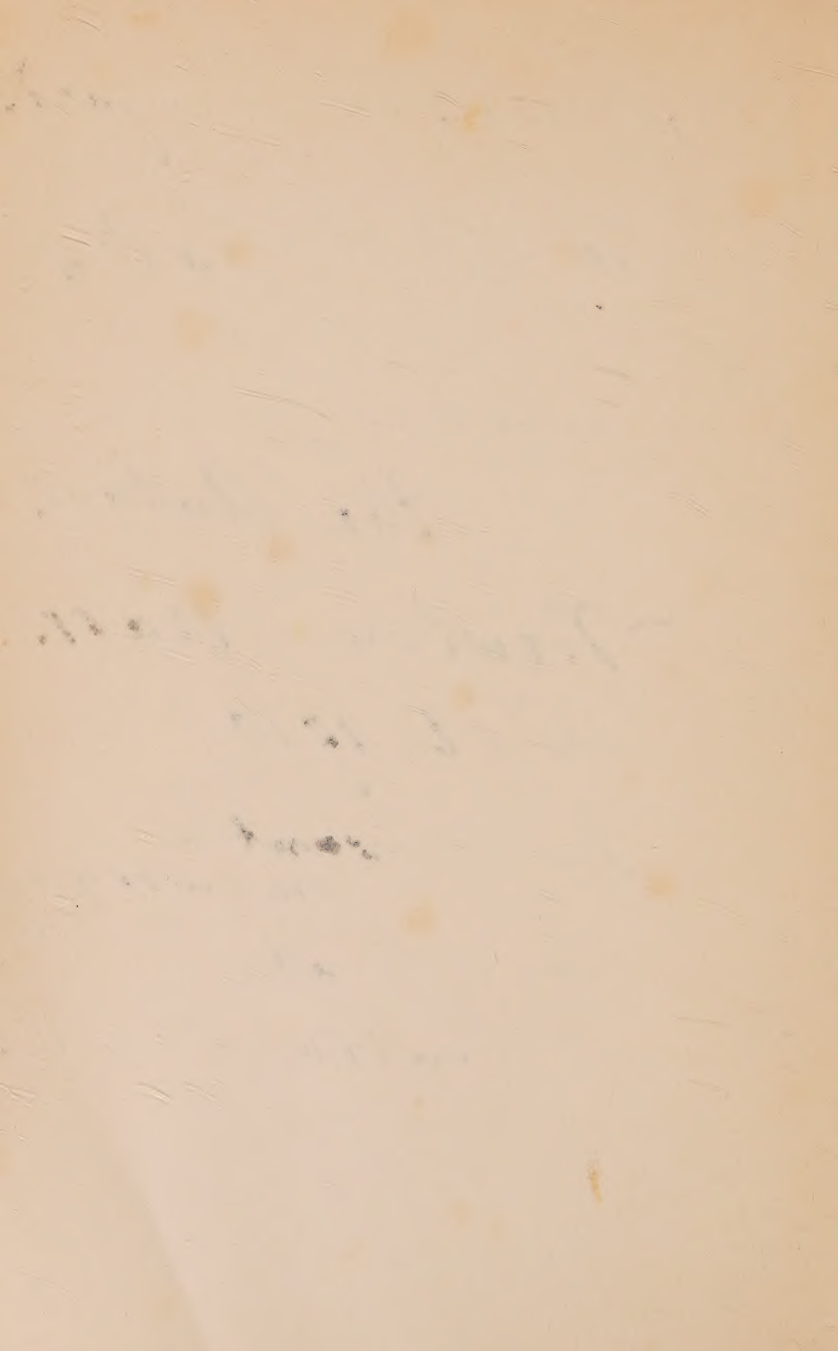
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The Author.

W. Newton Mass.

Sept. 1910

In pleasant
memory of
my stay at
Central Village.







Faithfully Yours,
A. L. T. Huizinga
Vernon Hiles, Thompson Conn.,

BELIEF IN A PERSONAL GOD

BY
A. v. C. P. HUIZINGA



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TO
FAITH TRUMBULL MATHEWSON
THIS BOOK IS
LOVINGLY DEDICATED

BELIEF IN A PERSONAL GOD

We remember how Matthew Arnold, the "disciple of sweetness and light," in the pride of his culture scoffed at the popular notion of "the magnified non-natural man whose chief function is to dispense *arbitrary* punishments and rewards." What Arnold's warrant is for the assertion that people believe God to distribute punishments and rewards in arbitrary fashion, we are unable to gather, unless it be the fact that people conceive differently of God and His judgments on human affairs. What seemed arbitrary to Arnold's enlightened culture, is — we may safely assume — to the mind of the average believer the unfailing, and unerring equity of God.

But Arnold, in the silken bonds of that luxury of refined self-indulgence to cultivated tastes, bewails in his captivity, passionately, his incapacity to share the faith of old. The consummate flower of the culture of his age, and not unconscious of his high accomplishments, he yet perceives the incomparable moral grandeur of the Christian faith. He does not see the connection between the belief in the crude notions of traditional Christianity and the envied Christian dispositions reared under the influence of these inadequate representations of

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God and the world's government. In plain Bible-terms, Arnold has too much of that wisdom of the world which is foolishness with God. Yet, one thing Arnold perceived clearly; and he proclaimed it with a glow and a sympathetic warmth, which unconcerned, self-contained calm will hardly allow in souls

“ who weigh
Life well and find it wanting, nor deplore;
But in disdainful silence turn away,
Stand mute, self-centred, stern, and dream no more.”

This dominant note in the poet of doubt, and as to off-set the

“ Melancholy, long with drawing roar,
Retreating to the breath of the night-wind,
Down the vast edges drear,
And naked shingles of the world,”

is Arnold's proclamation of the natural victoriousness of the right under the laws of the Universe. The good must triumph. God is on the throne! There is indeed “a Power not ourselves which makes for righteousness.”

Some time ago the preacher-journalist Lyman Abbott, editor of the Outlook, created quite a sensation by his statement that he believed God to be impersonal. The God of the fathers, the personal God of Bible-teachings and of Christian faith, God our Father, creator of heaven and of

earth was impersonal, an *it*, a *power*; without even Arnold's addition that it is "making for righteousness." This qualification, "making for righteousness," introduces a personal element by giving the power an ethical flavor. And by so doing it practically brings it out of the force- and power-conception of the exact sciences; the cause of mechanically operating, fixed laws of behavior in the world of phenomena.

However much the method of physical sciences as detail study has encroached upon the metaphysical discipline, Du Bois Reymond's watchword; "Was nicht mechanisch gefasst ist, ist nicht wissenschaftlich verstanden," cannot establish itself in the science of sciences viz.: Philosophy and Theology. Häckel, for whom this method is the only one conceivable, reaches in "The Riddle of the Universe" the confident conclusion. "From the gloomy *problem* of substance we have evolved the clear *law* of substance. The monism of the cosmos which we establish thereon proclaims the absolute dominion of the 'great, eternal laws' throughout the universe. It thus shatters, at the same time, the three central dogmas of the dualistic philosophy — the personality of God, the immortality of the soul, and the freedom of the will." It never even occurs to him, that he persistently discards the principles on which their acknowledg-

ment rests, that he has precluded their consideration from the very first.

In the world of literature, also, the impersonal attitude broke down in the signal collapse of the naturalistic school. The mere registration of facts, the *procès-verbal* must have a significance, which requires the personal element and its valuation. Zola may say in his "*Roman expérimental*"; "We live only upon science. . . . It is science that is preparing the twentieth century. We shall be more virtuous and happy in proportion as science abolishes the ideal, the absolute, the unknown." Or he may declare boastfully; "We authors give instruction in the bitter science of life; we teach the lofty lesson of reality. This is what exists, we say; reconcile yourself to it. . . . I know no school more moral or more austere" (*Le Roman expérimental*).

The trouble is that morality has not shone forth particularly bright from the pages of naturalism. Human life engulfed by vicious tendencies and passions, in a setting of hopeless depravity and misfortune, appears driftwood, aimlessly tossed about. The naturalist gloats over it, revels in descriptions of the "submerged tenth," the dangerous classes, and outcasts. And distorting reality in disproportion to fit a morbid taste, Zola, Maupassant, Hauptmann, Sudermann and their ilk

pretend to give artistic pictures of reality. "Art a corner of nature seen through a temperament." This art, however, is the result of the temperament of a cock-sure pedant, the small philosopher who has done away with the incomprehensible. It is the fruitage of a materialistic age, of specialists and of the gaping crowd of unintelligent admirers, whose sciolism works havoc in the moral relations, when the personal element is degraded into concomitant appearances, into bubbles on the surging sea of whirling passions and human greed. We all feel that we are not part and parcel with our surroundings. We may in the native dignity of our soul rise up against a whole community, and change conditions, or if falling martyr in the conflict we will evoke yet, be it, a silent applause. Moreover, it should be remembered that in the surroundings themselves the material aspect though most apparent is after all less real than the personal element and influence, which subtly pervades every environment. Hugh Black in one of his sermons "Listening to God" observed truly: "We usually take an outside and surface view of what environment means. We think of it as our outward surroundings, conditions of work and conditions of home life. We think of it largely as a physical question, and imagine that if we could but improve the conditions of living, then

we would avert all the possible evil of the law of environment. There is very much in this aspect and we should encourage every effort towards the amelioration of the surroundings of life. But the law of environment is a far subtler thing than all that, and cuts much deeper into our lives. After all is said about material conditions, it has to be remembered that the *chief environment of a human life does not consist of things but of persons*. There is a moral and a spiritual climate as well as a physical. Why are the conditions of work and conditions of houses and streets and civic arrangements so important? It is because they represent the subtler personal factor. They are powerful agents in influencing habits and affecting character, just because they are so impregnated with the lives of others. The people make the homes and the workshops and the towns which have such influence over our lives. The beginning and the middle and the end of all influence is really personal if we probe deep enough into its seat." The undervaluation of personality in literature, the requirement of its suppression in description of life, and the elimination of the personal equation as a legitimate factor in the appreciation of author or reader has now been declared almost with one voice by the literary critics to be not only impossible, but in its attempts and influence

degrading. And so the naturalistic school of so-called realistic strength collapsed, because of its flagrant violations of human personality. René Doumic observed truly in his "Les Jeunes": "On a rétabli dans ses droits la vie intérieure qui seule peut donner à l'autre son prix. On s'est avisé que nous avons une âme." The native dignity of the soul and its priceless value is once more to be affirmed. Hobson says with much justification in "The Social Question," complaining about the evil influences of the commercial views of the Manchester School: "The standard of wealth and value is still commercial. Man still poses along with capital and land, simply as a factor of production, a means and not an end." Was it not this impersonal attitude which caused economics to be called "the science without bowels?" Ruskin's influence has fortunately exerted itself in many quarters for the betterment of economic conditions. Kant's valuable contribution against the materialistic and commercial attitude, which tends to slight personality, is his famous ethical formula: "So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as a means only."

J. Stuart Mill emphasizes the significance of personality in his essay "On Liberty": "Among the works of man, which human life is rightly

employed in perfecting and beautifying, the first in importance surely is man himself." It is all summed up in the old query of Matthew 16:26: "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Goethe once remarked, "We never know how anthropomorphic we are." This remark might have taught the small philosophers of the scientific craze that when "things are in the saddle and ride mankind," it is of short duration, because, as human beings, we must for that reason needs get our every conception humanized. Our query is whether this is a reliable portraiture of the innermost essence of things. Is this anthropomorphic conception, which we of necessity have of God, who is enthroned at the heart of all things, and most potently manifest in our own heart, a reliable one? We say "reliable," not "perfect," remembering Arnold's happy phrase, that our conceptions of God are at best but "poor attempts thrown out at a too vast reality." So they are. The finite plummet cannot sound the infinite depths of the ocean of Life; within our finite limitations we do not contain the vastness of Infinity. But it does not follow that we are not perfectly safe in building on this knowledge as the certainty of our theistic belief. It is once more the resulting query, after fruitless, tiring quest: "Who by searching can find out God?"

“ Yet high above the limits of my seeing,
 And folded far within the inmost heart,
 And deep below the deeps of conscious being,
 Thy splendor shineth: there, O God, Thou art!”
 — *Eliza Scudder.*

The importance of conscience for theism was especially emphasized by Cardinal Newman. Conscience is nearer to us than any other means of knowledge. He stated this once tersely: “I feel it impossible to believe in my own existence (and of that fact I am quite sure) without believing also in Him who lives as a personal, all-seeing, all-judging Being in my conscience.” I believe, it is generally conceded that there is ineradicable in the mind a universal instinct which would lead man to act as if the aim of his life were the approval of a Higher Being. Hoffman expressed it so well: “Das Gewissen ist das Organ zur Manifestation der göttlichen Gerechtigkeit im Menschlichen Selbstbewusstsein.” America’s greatest orator, Daniel Webster, said that the greatest thought that he ever conceived was the awful idea of his personal responsibility to a personal God. All ethics require a belief in God the Father Almighty. This is the significant reason why Thomas H. Green introduced his ethics with a metaphysical consideration as the basis for that “*unanalyzable* ought-feeling,” as Sidgwick pru-

dently calls it. The revelation of God at the heart of man is the original source of all ought's and duties of whatever specific content they may be. This assumption we find in the naturalistic ethics of Spencer as the intimations of the far-off perfect or "ideal society." We have only to sink this superstructure in the poor, marred creation as we behold it, and vest it with the sanctions of a personal God. Ethics derives from religion its motive and basis. Even Hartmann says: "Alle Thatssachen deuten darauf hin, dass das sittliche Bewusstsein der Menschheit sich ausschliesslich auf Grund ihres religiösen Bewusstseins entwickelt habe, dass es nirgends ohne dieses entstanden und in seiner besonderen Färbung überall durch dieses bedingt und bestimmt gewesen sei (Das Religiöse Bewusstsein der Menschheit, p. 26). Only if ethics — and psychological science corroborates the assumption — rests on a religious basis, have the old English words *duty* and *ought* sense in bringing in One, who is creator and judge, to whom is *due*, to whom is *owed*. To whom we pray that He forgive us our *debts*, as we forgive our debtors. For truly, to a *Something* nothing is owed or due. To mere power as physical science knows it, we cannot pray, and we cannot try to please it. For as one of England's foremost evangelical scholars, Dr. P. T. Forsyth says in

“The Living Christ:” “Make your God not a living God, but a force, a blind, heartless power, or even an irresponsive idea, and you make Him something your heart and will can have no intercourse with. Will can only commune with will, heart with heart. Make your ideal of Humanity an abstraction, not a living soul like Christ’s, and you reduce Humanity, as you would reduce God, to a mere ideal or a mere power. You make God and man at their highest something the heart cannot converse with. You rob them of personality.” Indeed, if those who incline towards the conception of an impersonal God, realized that with the idea of an impersonal God all revealed religion goes, they would possibly pause. God, then, never expressed himself in the perfect manhood of Jesus Christ. Prayer becomes a futility, for communion with God would be at an end. We could have ethics, and laws of justice, but there would be no dynamic goodness, no sacrifice.

It does appear that the well-known proclamation of Christ to the Samaritan woman at the well requires to be enforced in its spiritual interpretation. Does it not say: “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh

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such to worship him. God is a Spirit — and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. John 4:22-24. In all this we have the selfsame attempt to interpret the personal in terms of the impersonal, or in plainer statement, the spiritual in terms of the material universe. Goethe, though a pagan, meant that more than a mere impersonal force expressed itself in natural law when he said: “The older I grow the more surely I rely on that law by which the rose and the lily blossom.” These natural laws will not explain themselves in their operation. Tyndall himself said. “The scientific mind can find no repose in the mere registration of sequences in nature. The further question obtrudes itself with resistless might. Whence came the sequences.” (Fragments of Science, p. 64.) It was therefore to many a painful sensation when Lyman Abbott, who has much influence with many ministers, declared that he did not believe in a personal God. His God had evidently become Nature written large, and responded to in the sentiments of pantheistic reverie. The belief that God made all things has been illustrated under the progress of physical sciences and their vaunted evolutionary theory with such a strong emphasis on the immanent workings as to read that God made all things even so wisely that they can make and

maintain themselves. The teleologies now speak of "Zielstrebigkeit" instead of "Zweckmässigkeit." This one-sided emphasis, however wholesome its results as against the deistic views of a carpenter-God, who merely set the world agoing, but left it to its course, has assumed pantheistic leanings by losing sight of the transcendency of God. It comes practically to the same thing, whether God is excluded from the universe or considered captive in it. For in narrowing down the God-conception to the events of this world, this immanence gradually becomes only a thin cover of bald materialism. And the unphilosophic and worldly temper of our age is ready for the exclusive right of the tangible and material. So a dangerous spell is exercised upon many to-day. It is the crowning of Nature and her laws as God. It is practically Auguste Comte's attempt with the even louder proclaimed assertion that the age of speculation has gone by. Men are not to ask questions to which positive science can give no reply. This kind of "positive religion," or "the religion of science," blossoms forth in "new truths," "new theologies" of all descriptions, but always compromising and reducing the sphere of religion within the limits of the terra incognita of science. This of course is always the larger part, but as the unexplored remainder is its

ground, so it is also left only for the exercise of our religion. We see the religious life correspondingly dwindle into a less vital and serious affair, and Rabelais comes in again with his religion as a great perhaps. "Peut-être"—says Renan—"les destinés du monde sont elles réglées par les désirs du ciel!" Indeed! a polite way of doubting the faith which is the all-absorbing interest of the believer! Truly, "Paupertina philosophia in paupertinam religionem ducit." The queen of sciences is now supposed to be common property accessible to all. Characteristic in this regard is the circumstance that all kinds of professions are asked for opinions on specifically theological subjects. In the Augustinian controversy of the 9th century, Magister Florus complained of the fact that the court-philosopher Scotus should be asked for an opinion on a specific theological question. How great would be his indignation to see a professor in sociology, Giddings of Columbia, asked for an opinion about the consequences of belief or disbelief in a personal God. "Public Opinion," addressed theologians, sociologists, social workers, and psychologists. Perhaps the time is not remote, when a successful business man *ipso facto* is in order to discourse on theological questions. Of course when religious life is reduced to a social function, and we are fast travelling that way, the

theologian will be put aside for the sociologist, and religion will resolve itself into the moral activities which express themselves in our social life. Humanitarian efforts are commended in the service of Humanity. Comte, Proudhon, Poulin, and other atheists with intense interests in society confessed the positions: "La base de la science c'est la religion. La vraie religion c'est de n'en avoir aucune. La propagation de l'idée religieuse est au prix de l'acceptation de l'idée de la non-existence de Dieu." (Poulin: Religion et Socialisme.)

It is evident where a religion which is only the service of humanity, the mere morality of a social gospel, will lead us. But it also demonstrates that these men at least, with the customary French clearness, did not confuse social endeavors with the religious life itself. And they are to be thanked for that. Dr. Patton of Princeton sounded a true note of warning at a symposium at Drew Theological seminary when he said that the big slump in Christian faith is due to modern preaching. "The difficulty with most men is their inability to tell where they stand — if they do stand. The preaching of the present day is not as it used to be — a preaching of great verities. Much of it, alas, is an equal mixture of sociology and sentimentality. Instead of trying to Christianize society, ministers of the gospel are engaged, many

of them, in the great effort to socialize Christianity, and deliver sermon after sermon full of purely secular talk in the name of Christ. They are, to use a homely phrase, doing this new business under the old trade-mark."

History records the terrible consequences of the childish folly that led the frenzied revolutionists to abolish by decree the Christian religion and establish a cult of reason.

We saw the potent reaction expressed in the able ultramontane leader, Joseph Le Maistre, of the more profoundly religious elements. Bishop Von Keppler of Würtemberg remarked in a fine address that what modern shameless semi-culture objects to in Christianity is, in the intellectual order, the miracle; in the moral order, authority. His insistence on the danger and futility of compromise are strikingly true. To the man who is wholly in the meshes of the modern sceptical spirit, we are to bring the genuine life of faith, an unalloyed and undiminished Christianity. Surely, "Christianity for the lowest bidder" does not make conquests. We are therefore with one accord to stand foursquare upon the supernatural in our Christianity. The explanations of Christianity which make the religious life a value, a "religion de moi," a culture-affair, a *Weltanschauung*, or a social gospel in ethical activity,

are dangerously near going back on Christ, instead of going back to Christ, as is pretended. It is on record in his diary that "*Descartes résolut de ne travailler qu'à l'utilité du genre humain pour la gloire de Dieu.*" Now people incline to worship only as it is seen to be a utilitarian act. This inverted order dethrones God and explains the tendency to stand less in awe of the personal God, whom to fear is the beginning of wisdom.

Here is the great difficulty experienced in all rationalistic movements and tendencies. It does not work to reason oneself into a deep-felt obligation. When religion is made only a prop to sustain our life, our worship subservient to ourselves and the community, it is useless to expect the utmost sacrifice, even unto death. Rationalism, disregarding the personal God as revealed in Christ, sinks necessarily into a conventional morality. And a social morality is usually regulated by the criticisms of Mrs. Grundy, the obliquy of "*digito monstrari hic est,*" or the stronger restraint of civic and criminal legislation. All these means admittedly require only the minimum of outward conformity to standards. Under these conditions conscience is naturally belittled, and as a matter of fact, robbed of its authority. It expresses itself negatively in that man refrains from things tabooed by the social miléiu. He hides

away in the law, till the conscience is kindled by the independent authority which enables it to face conventional morality, because in it is felt the direct whisper of God Almighty. By the rational, progressive, advanced thinkers of course the conscience is never quite so seriously taken. This point is well illustrated by the reply of Dr. Minot J. Savage, a Unitarian preacher of New York City. In answer to the interview of "Public Opinion," whether the loss of belief in a personal God will bring about a less moral conduct among the mass of men, he as a popular exponent of Fiske's cosmic, evolutionary philosophy, stated that he does "*not* believe there is any danger of the substitution of an impersonal God for one who is in some sense personal in the popular mind." He adds: "The Universe is inevitably and eternally moral, because it must be in favor of the keeping of its own laws." Leaving aside for the moment the consideration that the universe can hardly be inevitably and eternally moral without betraying a personal quality, we would specially notice that that personal element of the responsible I, conscience, in which

"Some blessed Spirit doth speak
His powerful sound within an organ weak,"

is brought down to the level of prudential wis-

dom, acquired in racial and individual experience. Morality, strictly speaking, resolves itself into adaptability, always with the determining norm in the subject. We stand over the conscience, instead of the conscience over us. The spirit of social morality is evidently not as overawing, and imperative, as when the Holy Spirit breathes upon the heart of man and Christ is enthroned as Lord of the conscience; as when men stand up for Jesus with the sacrificial devotion of martyrs, ready to follow wherever He leads. With all due appreciation for endeavor in social betterment we take occasion to remind that they should always aim through the improvement of conditions at the improvement of the *individual*. Maurice in his Lectures on Conscience calls attention to the fallacious seesaw in appealing to public opinion to enforce the claims of the individual conscience, and to the individual conscience to improve public opinion. Evidently the delicate edge of our moral sensibilities is not sharpened in this inter-course at all, but is when spirit meets with spirit in our personal dealings with our personal God. This is the sphere of genuine Christian religion. All other is sham and counterfeit. The personal element must be prominent, subjectively and objectively. I feel that I am alone in my individual aspirations and responsibilities. It is my private

concern; moral obligations are not discharged by proxy. And I also feel that I am not accountable to the world. With my God I may rise in sovereignty against the world to conquer even in apparent defeat. I may tremble before the Judge at the bar of the inly written law in the midst of the greatest worldly success and applause. The mighty characters which adorn the history of the Christian religion, as strong in the midst of trial and persecution as in piping times of peace, were reared in the personal intercourse with a personal God. Our deepest insights into the heart of reality are born of an ethical nature. Personality is the reality of reality. This is precisely what Daniel Webster declared to be the greatest thought that ever bore in upon his mind; our personal responsibility to a personal God! As the claims of conscience are allowed freer scope over our lives the world's claims are losing power over us. The strong characters are those who have cultivated an obedience to the voice which controls all the issues of the world, the still, small voice within! Cardinal Newman writes well:

“A voice within forbids, and summons us to refrain;

“And if we bid it to be silent, it yet is not still; it is not in our control;

"It acts without our control, without our asking, against our will;

"It is in us, it belongs to us, but it is not of us; it is above us.

"It is moral, it is intelligent; it is not *we*, nor at our bidding;

"It pervades mankind as one life pervades the trees."

This aspect of Christianity may properly be elevated into a larger significance. We may view Christianity from its inward, positive, dynamic side; Christ at work on the hearts of the believers, as contrasted with its formal, external, its social and historic course.

The issue of an inward religion is the burden of the prophets, and always centres on the accountability to a personal God. Every inward revelation bears the stamp of an authority over the world which it entreats to gracious submission to the Creator's will. In the conflict of moral struggles it asserts: "Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord." (Jer. 1:8.) "We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29.) Butler said well: "If it had might as it has right, it would rule the world." The assumption that in serving God truly we thereby serve best humanity, needs no proof for the Christian. The

distinguishing characteristic of Christianity is that preceptive, legal restraining codes are turned into living, dynamic, positive life-principles. Christ buttresses Christianity. Christ lives in the Christian, as Paul reiterates with persuasive testimony, and thus makes the Church a "Collective Christ." Christ as the Lord of the conscience vitalizes the God-consciousness. Faith renders the prescriptive law a native desire. If proof of faith's assumption be lacking, the Christian philosopher may similarly urge the impossibility of all strictly rational ethics. We cannot be — even in theory — good without God! The very moral standards of the world witness to the personal expression of God's moral perfection. The law is still a schoolmaster. If it does not always lead to Christ, yet, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." And the cultivation of the susceptibility to God's claims upon us as against the world's demands requires its time-honored emphasis. It is essentially an individual personal influence, with which unbelieving emancipationists try to dispense. They proclaim themselves freed from the most delicate sense of awe. But instead of yielding to the restraint of the fear of the Lord they cower in most degrading manner under the conventional codes of men, fluctuating, uncertain and unreliable. When man feels small, God looms up

large; when man feels big, God loses His awful majesty. The moods of men differ, and the impress of God upon their minds differs accordingly. There is, indeed, a valuation by man of even God. A free moral agent he is, with personal responsibility to a personal God! So far as he responds does he recognize himself as responsible. But exactly on this score it cannot therefore be only a question of subjective appreciation. Value-judgments must have objective reference to our subjective susceptibility. This is guaranteed in our Lord Jesus Christ. As Dorner expresses it, profoundly and truly in his work "On the Person of Christ" (Vol III, p. 235): "The idea of the world as it stands eternally before God is not terminated and completed with susceptibility to God, but, according to his unfathomable gracious will, includes also that this susceptibility be absolutely filled in itself; and, at the point where the central fulfilment corresponding to the central susceptibility takes place, the world, too — which, as merely susceptible to God, or even sinful, was outside of God,— entered into the circle of Divine Life, into the life of the triune God Himself, even as the immanent Divine Life explicated itself here."

In proportion as God is our main concern, we will be less concerned about the opinions of men. He who fears God does not fear men, whilst he

who stands in fear of men cannot obey God. To be truly obedient unto God is to be supreme over men, whilst obedience to the world tends to make us fear men more than God, in spite of the Savior's warning words that we should rather fear Him who can destroy the soul as well as the body. Where we face God the world's claims and its wisdom are lost on us. We rise superior to them because the Lord of the Conscience speaks with authority, and not as the scribes. This reverence for a man's conscience is the specific fruit of the Reformation. Luther rose on that memorable occasion to declare before the august assembly of ecclesiastical and imperial dignitaries that it was not advisable to do anything against one's conscience. He felt God in it, and therefore would not have any meddling with it, even by the established, traditional Church!

Kant, being precluded from laying the God-consciousness at the basis of his ethics, was yet so mightily impressed by the verdicts of conscience — an erring conscience was to him a chimera — that he would enforce his ethics by the God-consciousness. When moral life is actuated by the thought of God requiring our duties of us, we rise to the religious plain. Religion is taking our duties as divine commands. It deserves notice that Kant in spite of this high estimate should

theoretically reject the validity of this consciousness of freedom, immortality and God, allowing them merely, *as-if* they were true. In his own words: "It is true that the ideas of freedom, immortality and God are not knowledge, but at least they are thoughts, the objects of which are possible." Remarkable is the contrast of the Catholic estimate of conscience. And the sociologist may also contrast the morality of Protestant and Catholic communities, although I am aware that this should be done with a good deal of caution. When James Cardinal Gibbons in "The Faith of our Fathers" says: "It should be borne in mind that neither God nor His Church forces any man's conscience; to all He says by the mouth of His prophet, 'Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death' (Jer. 21:8.); the choice rests with yourselves," he is addressing non-Roman-Catholics. It cannot be taken therefore as illustrating the Roman-Catholic regard for conscience.

The very Reverend Archbishop's chapter in the same book "on the relative morality of Catholic and Protestant countries," renders the task too easy in making out a superior Roman-Catholic morality. We quote the well-known passage of Pascal's "Pensées." "On ne voit presque rien de juste ou d'injuste qui ne change de qualité en

changeant de climat. Trois degrés d'élévation du pôle renversent toute la jurisprudence. Un méridien décide de la vérité. Plaisante justice qu'une rivière ou une montagne borne! Vérité en deçà des Pyrénées, erreur au delà." But in order to do justice to the Catholic conception, which discards the verdicts of conscience as authoritative, and considers it unreliable and dangerous, we must remember that the priesthood with its delegated divine powers is there to give counsel. The Church mounts guard over the conscience of her children. The loss of auricular confession was ever regretted by the cultured pagan Goethe, because of the benefit of an enlightened and conscientious priesthood was lost. And truly! from a utilitarian standpoint for those who do not recognize the authority of Christ over their lives, the worldling surely finds better counsel in confession to the priest than in the conventional codes of the "Gemeingeist," a conventional morality, subject to contemporary swirls of opinion as ephemeral as unreliable. On hearing a Pauline Father say that many of the radicals of the Protestants came to their confessionals, I thought it on the whole a change for the better. If the inner life is to be regulated by the moral estimates of the people, instead of having the Light of the cross shine in the recesses of our deceitful heart,

the enlightened priesthood with its knowledge of human nature may be available. Yet, in neither case is there the direct dealing, the keenest perception of the eternal right. Catholic writers have always belittled conscience as much as worldly people. Edouard Rod, a Swiss professor of literary ability and moralizing tendency, though Protestant, is a striking example of the unconscious influence of the Catholic spirit in estimating conscience as a guide in life. I quote from his work "Silence": "Alas in these delicate relations of the heart, who care trace the precise limits between good and evil? Who can say when the love forbidden by human laws is forbidden also by those higher laws whose divine indulgences we can at times forecast? Who shall pronounce at what stage a sin is expiated by suffering or even transmuted thereby in its very essence?" We remember Augustine's utterance, "*At quæ pejor mors animæ quam libertas erroris?*" and refer to the encyclic of Gregory XVI against Laménais, in which the right of private judgment in matters of conscience is branded as an absurd, erroneous doctrine, yea, a delirium.

That the priest therefore is needed to stand guard over the conscience is the implied solution in every case, if Rod would not solve his difficulties that way. The reformed believer agrees with

hearty yea! Only his Priest must be none other than the High Priest, Christ Jesus, our Lord!

When considering the personality of God, it is well to point out how the much noised-about theories of the small philosophers, which court the method of exact sciences for theology, are abstract, artificial, and impractical in matters of belief. Lotze's watchword is distorted: "Exceptionally wide is the extent of mechanism in the universe, but its mission is entirely subordinate." The small philosophers who take the first half and multiply it by two to have a complete rational explanation of the whole, of course decided on the mechanical explanation of all things. This attitude reduces religion to a mere appearance,—all that the method of physical sciences in rational explanation will leave us logically. The personal element in conscience is discredited, and the personal equation is eliminated. According to the methods relating to impersonal, universal, and cosmic phenomena, *personal elements* are merged in "social law." The moral self, however, will not be subdued. There is an everlasting "I" to cry out the adage of that island-province of Holland in struggling with the ever-encroaching sea: "Luctor et emergo!" As you cannot make an abstraction of your own personality, so you cannot eliminate from the scene on which you look out

the personal elements which you do naturally recognize there. It is sacrificing the facts of the inner life to the methods of natural science. The cock-sure theorist of to-day, however, will not recognize these facts and sneeringly imitates the French theorist in retorting: "If the facts do not conform to the theory so much the worse for the facts." Well now, the inner life is a fact; the very platform from which we proceed in all our knowledge. The slighting of the greatest fact will issue in undervaluations of personality, and reflect upon the moral life most harmfully. Our Anglo-Saxon theorists will not stand by the other French motto of theoretic fanaticism: "Vivent les principes p risse le monde." But when the day of the result of the disintegration of religious belief comes, we have already paid dearly for our errors. Therefore when "things are in the saddle and ride mankind," it is well to guard doubly our inner life, and not to bar its facts from consideration. All facts must be taken into consideration, and in right proportion, setting and significance. We aim at truth.

Truth, from the Old English *treowth*, is related to the German *Treue* and Dutch *trouw*, which mean faithfulness. This brings the old word *troth* alongside of truth in a little different shade of meaning as "faith or fidelity." The etymology

of the word thus illustrates the defined meaning as "conformity to fact or reality." Truth, then, is fidelity to reality! We must relate the vast and varied story of human experience true to facts, as we find them; not as we want them to be according to preconceived notions or bias. Let us revert for a moment to Newman's "Grammar of Assent," as giving valuable suggestions, if his details are often unreliable. Newman was of a profoundly religious nature, and his famous poem, "The pillars of the cloud," with its opening stanza, "Lead Kindly Light, lead Thou me on," is strikingly characteristic of his personality. "All real assents," he declares, "are personal in their character." The Eternal Being is the supreme of all concrete facts and the assent to his Being is not notional but real. Immediate apprehension by our whole personality brings us to this assent, not the intellect alone. But Newman employs what he calls the "illative sense," to bring us to the apprehension of Divine Being. This is not a special faculty (as Professor Ladd's ontological sense), but a sense intimately bound up with the "personal equation" of the inquiring agent. Kant's transcendental Ego of the apperception may be constructed into such a faculty. But it in all events turns out that knowledge is incorporated into belief through experience. There is

a personal life-experience in it. Life-conduct and belief are organically related,— a fact which the modern world of manuals, and cut-and-dried theories has forgotten evidently. President Eliot somewhere speaks of a “judicious selection of beliefs,” as if beliefs could be selected indifferently! The belief is, indeed, the whispered *credo* of the heart, which in biblical sense means the whole personality. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” And then, of course, it may strike the ear of the modernized unbeliever differently, that “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” As Pascal said well: “Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas.” Even Nietzsche perceived the close relation between the *credo* and personal life, the organic relation between belief and conduct, when he writes of the better days of his youth: “Ich liebte damals die Religion wie eine Mutter; das Christentum des elterlichen Hauses war mir glatt und weich angelegen gleich einer gesunden Haut.” And this “Atheist in logischer Reinkultur,” writes even later as “Freigeist, wenn er sich von den Dogmen freigemacht hat, dasz er immer vor dem religiösen Zauber auf der Hüt sein müsse.” “In religion we have to deal with concrete living realities, namely, the soul of man and God; and therefore *primâ facie*, abstract reasoning is out of court as a

source of assent," says Newman truly. We may say, each man faces God in his own way, and God left at the heart of man His witness. In a recent treatise on the value-judgments which are now in vogue, the conclusion is significant that: "Die moderne Ethik der höchsten Werte, gleich die letzte Gedanken der Weltanschauung *alogisch* genannt werden, das heisst sie können niemandem mit Verstandesgründen aufgezwungen werden." If the personal elements have been slighted and stunted the recognition of Personality is not easy. William James says in vindication of the personal element that the notion is abroad: "Religion is a survival theory, pure anachronism for which deanthropomorphization of the imagination is the remedy required. The less we mix the private with the cosmic, the more we dwell in universal and impersonal terms, the truer heirs of science we are. In spite of the appeal which this impersonality of the scientific attitude makes to a certain magnanimity of temper, I believe it to be shallow, and I can now state my reason in comparatively few words. That reason is, that so long as we deal with the cosmic and the general, we deal only with symbols of reality, but as soon as we deal with private and personal phenomena as such, we deal with realities in the completest sense of the term." Unfortunately James dis-

solves this reality into a floating soul-sensation; but we shall acknowledge this reality in dead earnest. As Lotze said in his *Microcosmos* "We are immediately conscious of self as thinking and energizing, that is as a substance with power. If we are not conscious of this we are conscious of nothing. We cannot think and not be conscious of a thinking self, and a thinking self is a substance." And on page 157: "If a being can appear anyhow to itself or order things to it, it must be capable of unifying manifold phenomena in an absolute indivisibility of its nature." The platform on which we stand and from which we look out in all our observations, is our inner life. We are therefore to emphasize that the first point of all certitude is in consciousness, that the home of truth is in man.

"Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
 From outward things, whate'er you may believe;
 There is an inmost centre in us all,
 Where truth abides in fulness. . . .

— and to know

Rather consists in opening out a way
 Whence the imprisoned splendor may escape,
 Than in effecting entry for a light
 Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
 The demonstration of a truth, its birth,
 And you trace back the influence to its spring

38 BELIEF IN A PERSONAL GOD

And source within us, where broods a radiance vast,
To be elicited ray by ray as chance shall favour."

— *Paracelsus of Robert Browning.*

Within we have the distinctions between right and wrong; within are revealed the primordial truths on which we build all our knowledge. If we do not know ourselves as persons, and kindred to the Spirit, who upbears our own, then of course we fall into the impersonal atmosphere of pantheistic, or materialistic thought. But in such a system morality has hardly a place. The conscience is weakened as personal responsibility is on the wane. And the "remorse of conscience," which the Old-English terms so strikingly "the ayenbite of inwyt," has no place in such world view.

It is this tremendous fact of free-agency and consequent responsibility which, as professor James Seth says (in "A Study of Ethical Principles," p. 349), is the ground characteristic of our life, and forbids its resolution into the life either of nature or of God! If, therefore, we accept the truth of personality, if we believe ourselves, we must grant free agency. It is personality's soul. Conversely, if we sufficiently recognize the fact of free-agency, we have to acknowledge personality within and without. Victor Hugo describes this eloquently in his great novel, "Les Misérables": "While there is an infinite

outside of us, is there not an infinite within us? These two infinities (fearful plural),—do they not rest super-posed on one another? Does not the second infinite underlie the first, so to speak? Is it not the mirror, the reflection, the echo of the first, an abyss concentric with another abyss? Is this second infinite intelligent also? Does it think? Does it love? Does it will? If the two infinities be intelligent, each one has a will principle, and there is a ‘me’ in the infinite above as there is a ‘me’ in the infinite below. The ‘me’ below is the soul; the ‘me’ above is God. To place, by process of thought, the Infinite below in contact with the Infinite above is called prayer. There is, we are aware, a philosophy that denies the infinite. There is also a philosophy, classed pathologically, which denies the sun; this philosophy is called blindness. To set up a sense we lack as a source of truth is a fine piece of blind man’s assurance.”

Nietzsche imagined he had gotten beyond the distinctions between good and evil. (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse.*) But the atheistic Zarathustra consistently breaks the tables of the law, only to rewrite them in his own way. And the most radical ethical cults of naturalistic conviction insist on being good . . . without God. This illustrates Calvin’s remark that “No man can take a survey

of himself, but he must immediately turn to the contemplation of God in whom he lives and moves." And as you cannot logically deduce the objective from the subjective, we repeat in plain words that God left a witness at the heart of man, the conscience in which

" Spirit with Spirit can meet —
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands
and feet."

The more, however, this inward reality is slighted, the only platform from which we survey the ordering of our experiences, the more we are dealing with things as they are *not*; the more the hard grinding causal nexus of mechanical procedure closes in upon us. The history of the able and candid Romanes is a striking illustration of this fact. Nietzsche reduces "das Seelending," to a "Begleiterscheinung," and calls it deceptive at that. To quote him: "Schuld an der Bildung der Fundamentalbegriffe in welche wir den Stoff der Erfahrung einkleiden, ist die primitive menschliche Natur mit ihrer rohen Psychologie, ihrem Glauben an das Seelending, das Ich. So entstammen die Kategorien aus der mythenbildenden Phantasie, die in alles Erlebte ein Ich hineinlegt, alles nach menschlicher Art deutet." And yet Nietzsche realizes the great importance

of the personal element full well. As Dr. Rudolf Eisler remarks in his fine treatise, "Nietzsche's Erkenntnistheorie und Metaphysik": "Nietzsche weisz, dass alles Philosophieren schliesslich in der Persönlichkeit des Philosophen wurzelt, durch die Eigenart des Fühlens und Wollens des Philosophische System, ist ihm das Gewächs der Art zu Leben, der Ausfluss einer Lebensgesinnung, Lebenswertung."

It deserves special notice that Hegel, however much he makes man in pantheistic fashion to emerge as a product of his social surroundings, insists that "Tugend ist eine sittliche Persönlichkeit," fed on the breasts of society. This emphasis on the reality of Personality enables Hegelian ethics to say: "My station and my duty!" although his conception of law does not take cognizance of individual claims. But on the old English heraldry we find the motto: "Dieu et mon droit," God and my right! And on the royal escutcheon, "Ich dien." In the service of God I find my rights and vindication, as I find in Him the moral authority over my life. In this connection we see the central position of the doctrine of incarnation, and of the God-man Jesus Christ buttressing Christianity. The tissue of Old England's moral fibre was woven in the real intercourse of the Puritan stock with their personal

God. As Cromwell, himself reared under the sense of God's unerring awful justice, wrote: "How can we expect loafers and tapsters to stand up against gentlemen with a keen sense of honor and loyalty to their sovereign? We must give them an even higher impetus; we must appeal to their God!"

This is exactly the sense that is on the wane, even among the leaders in our church-life, the individuality of our Christian religion, the reality of the Christ-life in our own soul, in our life, so that we may "stand up for Jesus," and do His bidding. In an address before a ministerial meeting in Chicago, the speaker put the question: "Is there improvement in the spiritual tone among the membership of the churches, or is the improvement largely ethical? By ethical I mean along the line of assisting men on the human side, and it is in this line we hear of most." Also, "Is there a greater interest in missions? Are we alarmed in our inmost souls for the salvation of the world, or is it to fall in with what has been commended and is generally done?" In conclusion the observation that God uses even the shams and empty pretense, a remark plainly expressing the speaker's Christian faith, which in spite of the actual, apparent showing, has "the invincible ignorance of defeat." Because of the promises of

Christ, "the weak will yet confound the mighty, and the things which are not bring to nought the things that are." "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God stronger than men." Yet, religious life is at a low ebb, and the contemporary swirl of opinions is getting its dictates from worldly wisdom. Cæsar and the ethics of social life are usurping fast the place of Christ and the Bible as the law of life. Meanwhile the moral phase which relates immediately to the belief in the Absolute and is bound up with it, is rapidly undermined. Bacon said rightly that a smattering of philosophy leads away from God, but solid, interested thinking leads back to God. The trouble is that people have lost interest in the supreme issues of life, hinging on their soul-concern, in better times their sole concern! They avowedly disbelieve with pride, in their professed ignorance of the things they reject. And such is the case with the belief in a personal God! Man is haunted by the ideal! God somehow touches him. If we will but carefully and candidly consider ourselves, and all that is, we shall conclude that at the basis of all things is an *oughtness*, which gives the "isness" of descriptive sciences its meaning, its worth, if you please. We should leave those values bound up with the things of descriptive science, and

speak of a personal transvaluation in knowledge, rather than separate in Ritschlian fashion the existential or descriptive (scientific) and the appreciative or religious (value) judgments. The lurking disbelief in a personal God of to-day is not after the fashion of the "negative theologies," on the ground of Spinoza's "*Omnia determinatio est negatio*," as with Fichte, Mansel, Bradley, and others. In the "negative theologies," the attempt is made to *exalt* the Divine, even beyond thought and expression. But we can only determine the Absolute by predicates from our experience; and the fact that our limited experiences hold only partial truth does not invalidate our experience so far as it goes. The rejection of the belief in a personal God is nowadays of a more materialistic flavor. Standing four-square on the seen, the unseen and spiritual is less potently in evidence to the mind of the average church-member. This social gospel of to-day dictates in legalistic way rather from without than from within. So the God of our fathers, the Christ-expression of His person is less real, and people are so much mixed up with the world that they tend to become of it. The conception of a personal God may assume crude forms, but it will always be infinitely superior to the fallacy of making impersonal our triune God, Father,

Son, and Holy Ghost; because then the moral relationship has an end. Calvin, correcting the anthropomorphites who did conceive of God as corporeal, because of plain anthropomorphic descriptions in the Bible, asks "Who of even the least intellectual perception does not know that God uses a sort of baby-talk as nurses are wont to talk to children." But he would doubtlessly have preferred their erroneous notion to the view of Him as a cosmic, impersonal force, for this is destructive of the highest morality which blossoms in a sensitive conscience. As a Frenchman said so well: "*En portant à leur plus haut degré ses sentiments les plus intimes, on devient le chef de file d'un grand nombre d'autres hommes. Pour acquérir une valeur typique, il faut être le plus individuel qu'il est possible.*" This principle of personal influence, always adhered to as of the highest importance in all education, is deemed to be of no consequence in religious education, which holds the key to our moral life, by those who have come under the spell of a faithless, deceptive age of ethical precepts and schemes. Yet we hear them repeat: "Example teaches more than precept: *Ἡμῇ διδάσκει ἢ διδάσκει τῷ τρόπῳ.* It is heard on every side that precepts miss the power of coming close to the soul, unless embodied in personal life, expressed in terms of personality.

Suppose you match every precept of Christ in the wisdom-literature of the ages, and all the precepts of the Old Testament. You have not the law in living figure; no personal power, bearing close to us the message so as to render it desirable. Mere preceptive wisdom, mere ethics does not avail with us. Conscience cannot be legislated into a person. Nor can conscience be built into the law. In our social relations man figures as a personal factor. Examples of personality are making impression upon us. In Christ, the God-man, these relations are embodied as a living, personal authoritative figure. Even such men as Spencer and Fiske admit at least the desirability of the belief in a *personal* God, because of the good influence. . . . Lyman Abbott, however, tells us in sceptical wisdom that he has outlived that notion. Only as man lives consciously under the stimulus of person to person does he develop and guard his moral capacities. How an impersonal force would affect me I cannot tell, but I fail to see how it could bear upon my moral life, or stir my soul. When holding our sinful selves in His Light, comparing our poor efforts with the Beauty of His holiness, the believers feel miserable sinners in His sight. And in contrition of heart cling to His grace, whilst an eager desire for virtue, and a zeal to grow better, in the likeness of His moral perfec-

tion moves them. Yet, the strongest aspiration and self-denial leaves no room for satisfaction.

“ For merit lives from man to man,
And not, O Lord, from man to Thee.”

In the conventional morality of a social gospel, on the other hand, whose sanctions and authority lie with our fellow-creatures, we do not so much emulate our betters, as keep on the level with the average morality, and often excuse *unmoral* behavior by the inferior conduct of others. Dr. G. F. Wright, the scholarly editor of “*Bibliotheca Sacra*,” surely a man whose judgment should carry weight in these matters, answered to the interview of “*Public Opinion*”: “That the denial of man’s responsibility for his choices of good or evil, and the reduction of all crimes and misdemeanors and evil choices to the level of mere natural phenomena, will produce disastrous effects in the moral world is too plain to need discussion. The moral progress of the world is impossible without a lively sense of the fact that man is the arbiter of his own moral fortune. Any use of language which dulls the lustre of this great principle and makes man feel that he is the mere creature of circumstances or the mere product of direct activity of the underlying force of nature, whatever that may be, can be productive only of untold

evil." Dr. W. Hayes Ward, editor of "The Independent," another competent theologian, gave also as his opinion that an immanence which involves the loss of personality, running into monistic pantheism, will be seriously injurious." Prof. Hugo Münsterberg, of Harvard, although not a theologian, but a fine observer and eminent psychologist, remarks only too fittingly in his interesting book, "The Americans," introductory to the chapter on Religion: "The individualistic conception of life and the religious conception of the world favor each other. The more that an individual's religious temperament sees this earthly life merely as a preparation for the heavenly, the more he puts all his efforts into the development of his individual personality. General concepts, civilizations, and political powers cannot as such, enter the gates of heaven; and the perfection of the individual soul is the only thing which makes for eternal salvation. On the other hand, the more deeply individualism and the desire for self-perfection have taken hold on a person, so much the deeper is his conviction that the short shrift before death is not the whole meaning of human existence, and that his craving for personal development hints at an existence beyond this world." We may add that a life "in reference to eternity," as the old New England phrase runs, implies an

intercourse with the Personal God of salvation, who proclaims in Christ the command, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." "Be ye in the world, but not of it." In such real personal communion the believer grows in grace, and more obedient unto God than unto men. Conscience is conjoined with the personal accountability to a personal God. Princeton's motto well says: *Dei sub Numine viget!*

In conclusion, the classic instance in the world's literature which bears closely on this theme. Strange to say the average commentator on the Faust drama always quotes with great approval the "confession of faith," which the sceptical reprobate utters to the confiding, rustic maiden, in whose heart is awakened a strong love for him. We remember the scene. Faust and Margaret in the moon-lit garden! The cultured sceptic in his passions conjoined with the simplicity of a pure sacrificial love. She inquires about Faust's religion.

M. "Versprich mir Heinrich!

F. Was ich kann!

M. Nun sag 'wie hast Du 's mit der Religion?

.
Glaub'st du an Gott.'

- F. Mein Liebchen, wer darf sagen:
 Ich glaub' an Gott?
 Magst Priester oder Weise fragen
 Und ihre Antwort scheint nur Spott
 Über den Frager zu sein.
- M. So glaubst du nicht?
- F. Misshör mich nicht, Du holdes Angesicht!
 Wer darf ihn nennen,
 Und wer bekennen;
 Ich glaub' ihn?
 Wer empfinden
 Und sich unterwinden,
 Zu sagen: ich glaub' ihn nicht?
-
- Nenn's Glück! Herz! Liebe! Gott!
 Ich habe keinen Namen
 Dafür! Gefühl ist Alles
 Name ist Schall und Rauch
 Umnebelnd Himmelsglut."

Faust's sceptical tone of uncertainty runs gradually into the classic expression of pantheistic sentiment, which sees the individual, separate appearance arise and stand out on the background of the whole. But the wholeness of the unifying conception is a pure abstraction, and very harmful to true moral sentiment, as the "painted atheism" of pantheistic reverie does away with the personal God. Now, it should be noticed that Goethe intended exactly to reproduce the irre-

sponsible, evading state of mind in the seducing Faust. Faust does purposely avoid the emphasis of Margaret's faith in a personal God to whom we are responsible, face to face as he is with the burning passion, willing to be carried like driftwood, unrestrained by the fear of the Lord. But Gretchen must be lulled also in her thoughts of a personal God, our creator and judge. Feeling is vague and subjective, the pantheistic sentiments subjective. To call this sentiment "Faust's confession of faith," is therefore clearly a misnomer. Even the pagan Goethe, "das Welthind," as he loved to call himself, intends to show forth an opposite tendency from the austere morality of the Christian faith, when supplanted by an unmoral — often immoral — "Gefühlston der Empfindung." He said in a conversation with Eckermann (Febr. 17, 1831): "The first part of the Faust is almost entirely subjective, it is the outpouring of an individual in his passions." Yet this impersonal, undefined, sentimental pantheism which Goethe's artistic culture owned, but confessedly felt to be inferior to the lofty moral grandeur of the Christian faith, is rapidly finding its way into the Church. This gushy, emotional sentiment renders her powerless in the community as an organ for righteousness. We are prayerfully waiting for the time when the Grace of God

shall raise again strong men and women under the sense of the awful justice of a personal God, waiting for Christians who adorn the doctrine by the restraint of "the heart which is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: Who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."







